

# Reading Russian Orthodox Marriage Records

“How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

December 2022

## GOAL

This guide will teach you how to extract information from Russian Orthodox marriage records.

## INTRODUCTION

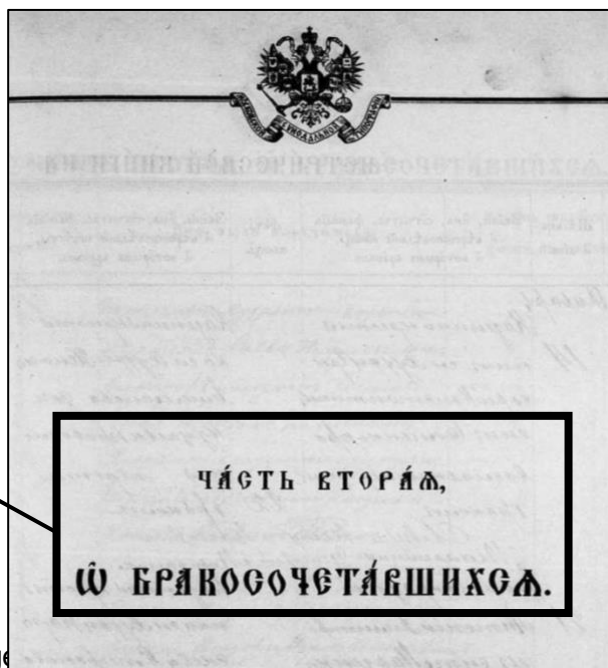
In 1722, Tsar Peter the Great mandated the keeping of birth, marriage, and death records by the Russian Orthodox church. In 1806, a standardized pre-printed form was established, and a later version of the form was introduced in 1838, which lasted until the time of the revolution. The form can be found all throughout the Russian Empire, and although variations may exist, but generally, most Orthodox vital records were kept in a columnar format. In most cases, these records were written in Russian. If you do not know how to read old Russian handwriting, you may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- [The Russian Alphabet](#)
- [Deciphering the Handwriting and Understanding the Grammar](#)

## HOW TO

Russian Orthodox church records (also known as metrical books (метрические книги) for a particular parish are typically organized by year, and then in three sections – by record type. Marriage records are found in section, or part two, and usually have a cover page at the beginning of the section as seen in the example to the right.

Part Two  
Of Marriages



Russian Orthodox marriage records span two pages. Information on the left-hand side of the page contains information about the date of the

marriage, and the bride of the groom while the right-hand side of the page includes witnesses, the name of the priest who performed the marriage and other comments.

Image from: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS9J-W9N8-N?i=268&cc=3511744>

See below for a translation of column headings.

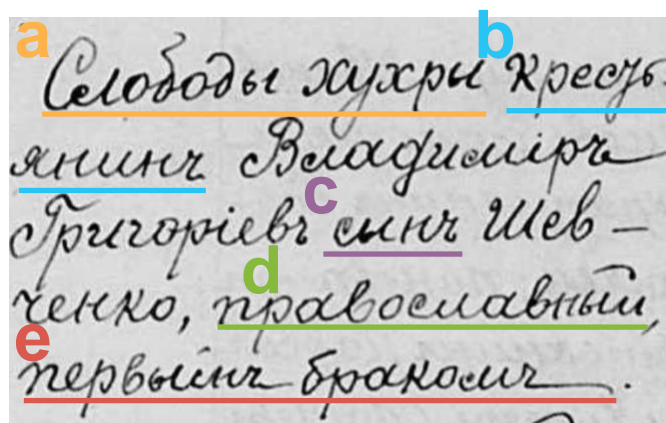
1. Entry number	2. Date of marriage	3. Social Estate, Name, and Previous Marital Status of the Groom	4. Age of the groom	5. Social Estate, Name, and Previous Marital Status of the Groom Bride	6. Age of the bride
Счѣтъ браковъ.	Мѣсяцъ и день.	Званіе, имя, Отчество, фамилія и вѣроисповѣданіе жениха, и которыми бракомъ.	Лѣтъ жениха.	Званіе, имя, Отчество, фамилія и вѣроисповѣданіе невесты, и которыми бракомъ.	Лѣтъ невесты.
25.	Октябрь 28.	Селодобы жухры Крестованна Владиміра Григоріевъ сынъ Шевченко, православный, первый бракомъ.	21.	Село Журавнаго Крестованна Марина Никити-форова дочь Лукакова, православная, первый бракомъ.	18.

**1. ENTRY NUMBER:** The number in this column means that couple was the x<sup>th</sup> couple married that year.

**2. DATE:** The date of the marriage was recorded in this column. In some cases, the month is only written at the top of the page, or even just once at the beginning of the month. You may need to scan the surrounding entries and/or pages to find the month. The examples below show the months in nominative case, which is most common in these records; however, you may find the months with different grammatical case endings, or even in an abbreviated form. Pre-1918 spellings have been preserved.

Month	Handwritten Example (Russian)	Month	Handwritten Example (Russian)
January январь	Январь	July июль	Июль
February февраль	Февраль	August августъ	Августъ
March мартъ	Мартъ	September сентябрь	Сентябрь
April апрель	Апрель	October октябрь	Октябрь
May май	Май	November ноябрь	Ноябрь
June июнь	Июнь	December декабрь	Декабрь

**3. GROOM:** Information about the groom is included in this column including his place of residence and social estate, name, previous marital status (first marriage, second marriage, etc.) and religion. Keep in mind that the paragraph within this column may vary in format, but below is a general representation of a typical column entry.



#### Translation and Record Outline:

[Location/place of registration]<sup>a</sup>, [social estate]<sup>b</sup>, [groom's given name] [groom's patronymic] son (may or may not be included)<sup>c</sup> [groom's surname], [religion],<sup>d</sup> [marriage number].<sup>e</sup>

Image from:

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS9J-W9N8-N?i=268&cc=3511744>

**a. Location:** The paragraph typically begins with the residence (or place of registration) of the family. In some cases, the location may be in adjectival form (with a (ян)ский or (ян)скій ending), as shown in the example below. Remove the adjectival ending and use a good gazetteer to help you determine the correct spelling of the town name.

Хухрянскій → Хухрянскій → Хухра

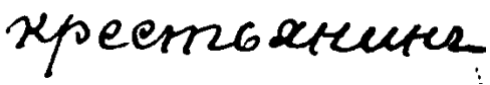
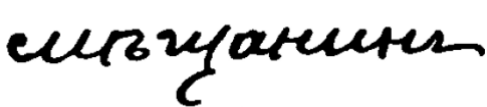
In other cases, the paragraph may begin with the word for town or village followed by the name of the town or village. Common words that mean village are found below. Keep in mind they are often in genitive case.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Farm	Хутор <i>Хутора (genitive case)</i>	
Village (with a church)	Село <i>Села (genitive case)</i>	
Village	Деревня <i>Деревни (genitive case)</i>	


#### OTHER HELPFUL VOCABULARY WORDS

English	Russian
city	город
settlement	посадъ

**b. Social Estate:** In the Russian Empire, each person had a certain place in society, known as their social estate or *soslovie*. They were often recorded in metrical books. Common examples are found below. There are many classifications of the peasant class. See the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#) for those variations or other social estates that may be listed. An occupation may be listed instead of a social estate. Again, see the Russian Genealogical Word List for help. The bride or groom's name will follow the social estate or occupation. Keep in mind endings may be slightly different for females.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Peasant	Крестьян(ъ)	
Petty bourgeois	Мъщан(ъ)/ Мъщанин(ъ)	

**c. Son/Daughter:** The word сын(ъ) may follow the groom's patronymic, though not in all cases. In the case of a bride, the word дочь may follow the bride's patronymic, though again, not in all cases. See below for handwritten examples. Pay special attention to the possible variations in the letter "д" in daughter.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Son	Сын(ъ)	

Daughter	дочь	дочь
Daughter	дочь	дочь

**d. Religion:** The religion will often follow the surname of the bride or groom. The most common religion found in these documents is Russian Orthodox. See below for a handwritten example. For other religions, see the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#).

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Russian Orthodox	православный (masculine)	православный
Russian Orthodox	православная (feminine)	православная

**e. Marriage Number:** The previous marital status in the form of the marriage number was recorded. For example, first or second marriage etc. Handwritten examples are included below.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
First marriage	первым бракомъ	первым бракомъ
Second marriage	вторым бракомъ	вторым бракомъ

**4. AGE OF THE GROOM:** The age of the groom at time of marriage is included in this column. It is most commonly written in numerals.

**5. BRIDE:** Information about the bride is included in this column including her place of residence and social estate, name, previous marital status (first marriage, second marriage, etc.) and religion. Keep in mind that the paragraph within this column may vary in format, but below is a general representation of a typical column entry.

a

b



Село Журавного Крестьянина  
 Марина Ники-  
 форова дочь Гусакова  
 православная  
 первым браком.

#### Translation and Record Outline:

[Location/place of registration]<sup>a</sup>, [social estate]<sup>b</sup>,  
 [groom's given name] [groom's patronymic] son  
 (may or may not be included)<sup>c</sup> [groom's  
 surname], [religion]<sup>d</sup>, [marriage number].<sup>e</sup>

Image from:

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS9J-W9N8-N?i=268&cc=3511744>

See sections a-e above for additional information about each of these items.

**5. AGE OF THE BRIDE:** The age of the bride at time of marriage is included in this column. It is most commonly written in numerals.

#### Right Side Translations

5. Who performed the marriage	6. Witnesses	7. Signatures of the witnesses, optional
Кто совершалъ таинство.	Кто были поручители.	Подпись свидетелей записи по желанию.
Священникъ Степанъ Петровъ	По жениху: Св. Хухры отставной рядовой Осодотъ Петровъ сынъ Дави- денко и казенный крестьянинъ Фео- дотъ Романовъ сынъ Журило; По невесте: Хухрянский казенный крестьянинъ Романъ Констатиновичъ сынъ Фененко и с. Журавного Крестьян. Афанасий Георгиевъ сынъ Овдьянъ.	

**5. WHO PERFORMED THE MARRIAGE:** This column contains the name of the priest who performed the baptism. The name of the priest is typically the same for all entries on a page, so the name may be written horizontally across all columns.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Priest	Священник(ъ)	Священникъ

--	--	--

**6. WITNESSES:** There were typically four witnesses listed – two for the groom and two for the bride. Witnesses may or may not be related to the family.

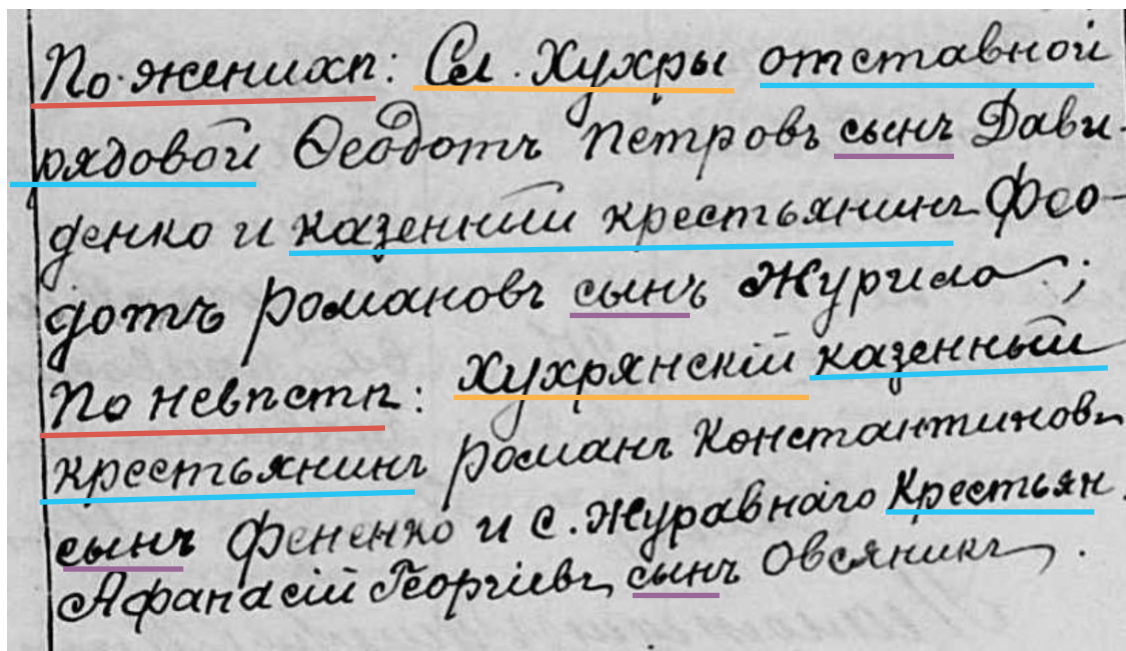


Image from: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS9J-W9N8-N?i=268&cc=3511744>

For the groom: [Location] [social estate or occupation], [witness' given name] [witness' given name], son/daughter [witness' surname] and [social estate or occupation], [witness' given name] [witness' given name], son/daughter [witness' surname].

For the bride: [Location] [social estate or occupation], [witness' given name] [witness' given name], son/daughter [witness' surname] and [social estate or occupation], [witness' given name] [witness' given name], son/daughter [witness' surname].

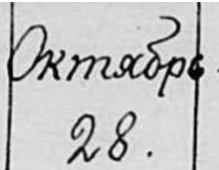
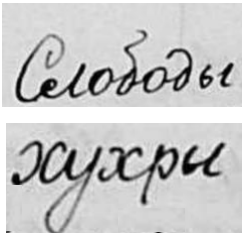
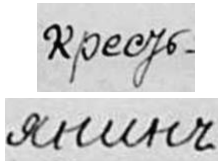
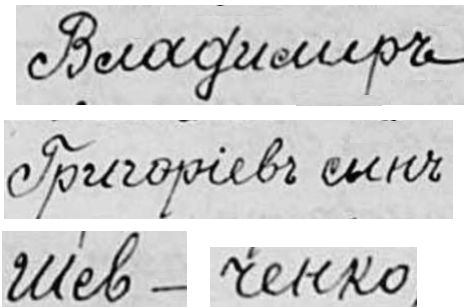
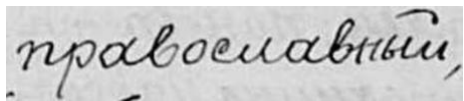
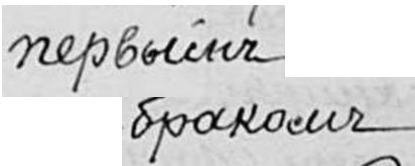
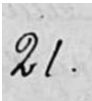
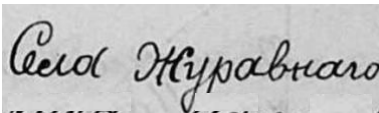
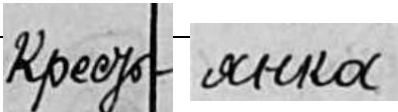
**6. WHO PERFORMED THE BAPTISM:** This column contains the name of the priest who performed the baptism. The name of the priest is typically the same for all entries on a page, so the name may be written horizontally across all columns.

English	Russian	Handwritten Example
Priest	Священник(ъ)	Священникъ

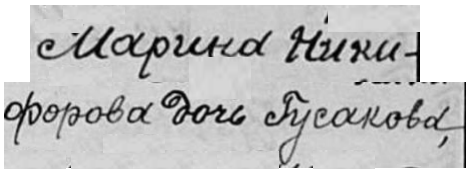
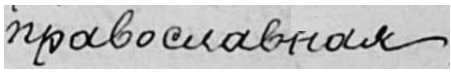
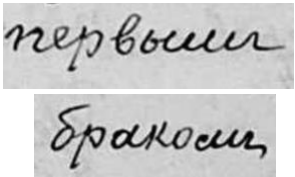
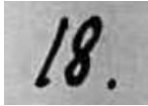
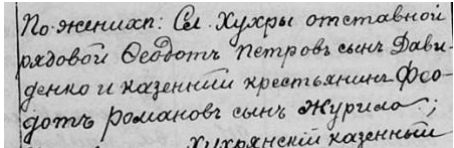
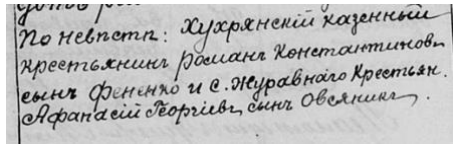
**7. SIGNATURES OF THE WITNESSES (OPTIONAL):** This column contains the signatures of the witnesses; however, in most cases, this column is left blank.

## PRACTICE

Now that we have learned about the key words, let's practice reading the record above by extracting the important genealogical details.

What was the date of marriage?		28 October 1907 (the year is found at the top of the page)
Where was the groom from?		Хухра (Khukhra)
What was the groom's social standing?		Peasant
What was the groom's name?		Владимиръ Григоріевъ Шевченко (Vladimir Grigoriev Shevchenko)
What was the groom's religion?		Russian Orthodox
Which marriage was this for the groom?		First marriage
What was groom's age?		21
Where was the bride from?		Журавное (Zhuravnoe)
What was the		



bride's social standing?		Peasant
What was the bride's name?		Марина Никифорова Гусакова (Marina Nikiforova Gusakova)
What was the bride's religion?		Russian Orthodox
Which marriage was this for the bride?		First marriage
What was the bride's age?		18
Who were the witnesses for the groom?		Khukhra retired private Feodot Petrov Davidenko and state peasant Feodot Romanov Zhurila
Who were the witnesses for the bride?		Khukhra state peasant Roman Konstantinov Fenenko and Zhuravnoe peasant Afanasi Georgiev Ovsyanik

## ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! Click [here](#) to try out the Activity.

© 2022 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reprinted or reproduced in any form for any purpose without prior written permission.